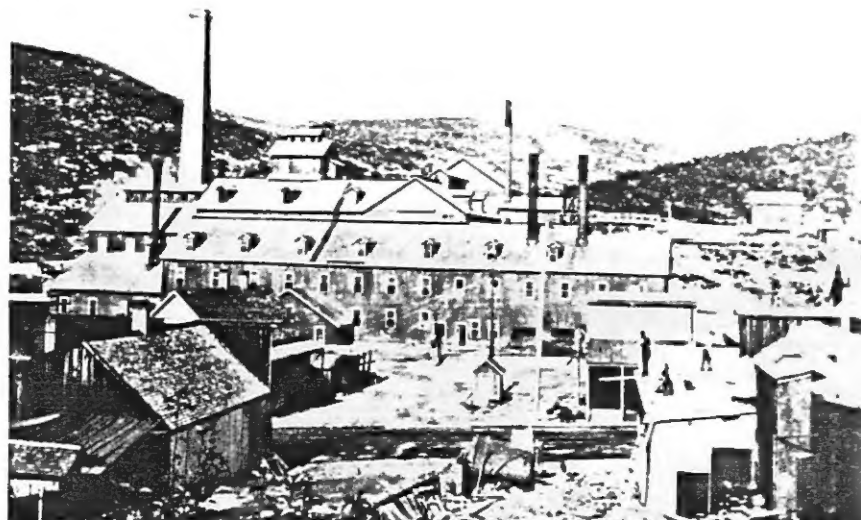
Courtesy: Blanch D. Buck

Ruins of the Grand Opera House after fire of '98.

Courtesy: Valley Studio

Main Street business district being rebuilt after the fire of '98.

Blythe Fargos "The Big Store"

Courtesy: Fraser Buck

PILL Treas Mt. Home

Treasure Mountain Home

A Centennial History of Park City, Utah

by
George A. Thompson
and
Fraser Buck

Published by
DESERET BOOK COMPANY
Salt Lake City, Utah
1968

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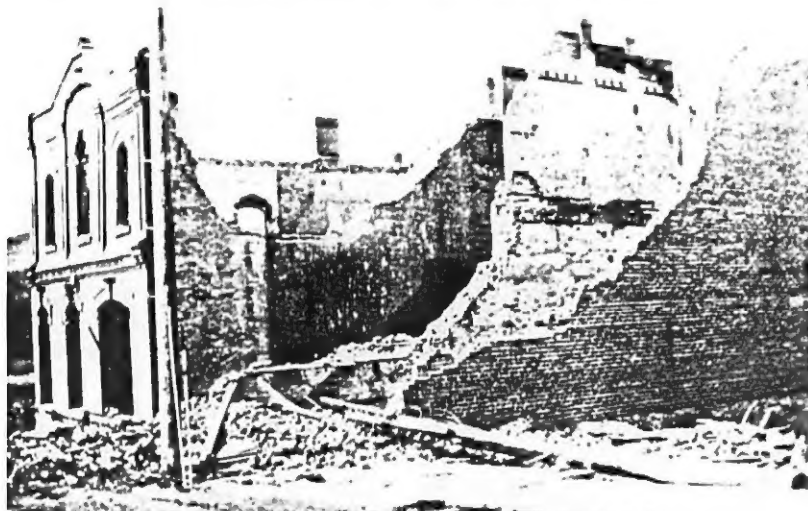
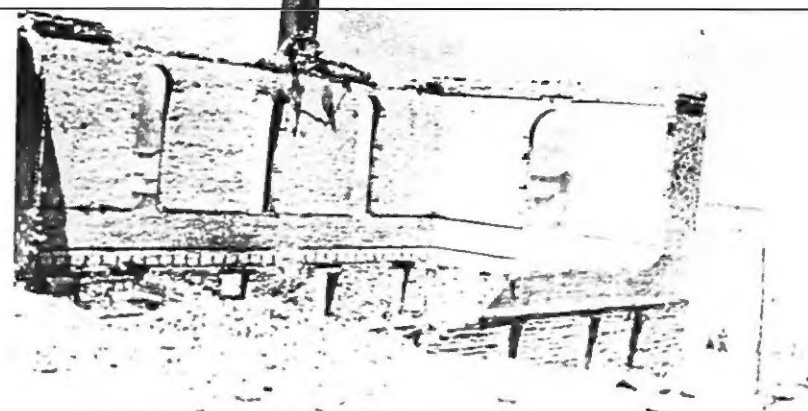
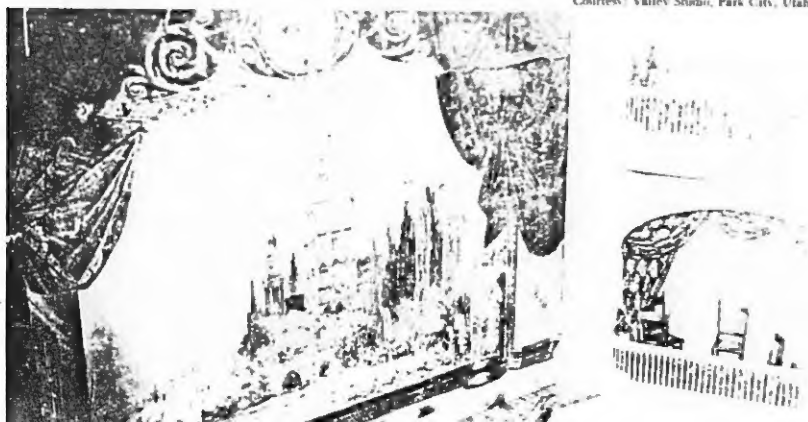
Courtesy: Valley Studio, Park City, Utah

June 19, 1898; Park City, Utah goes up in flames

Courtesy: Valley Studio, Park City

City Hall in ruins, 1898, Park City, Utah

Interior of Grand Opera House, 1898, Park City, Utah. Opening night, March 31, 1898; burned June 19, 1898.

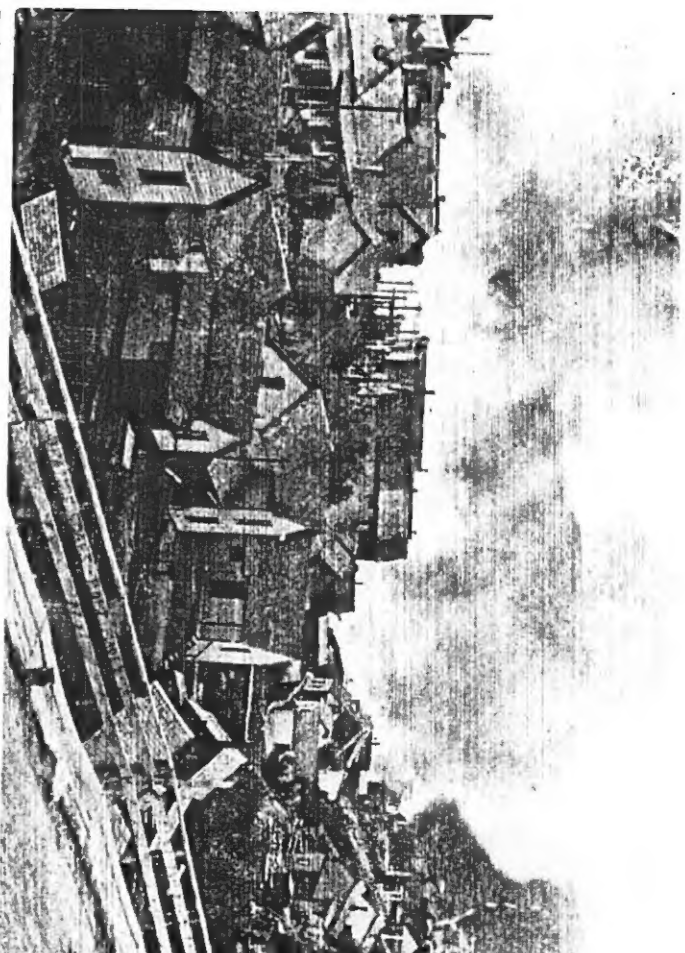
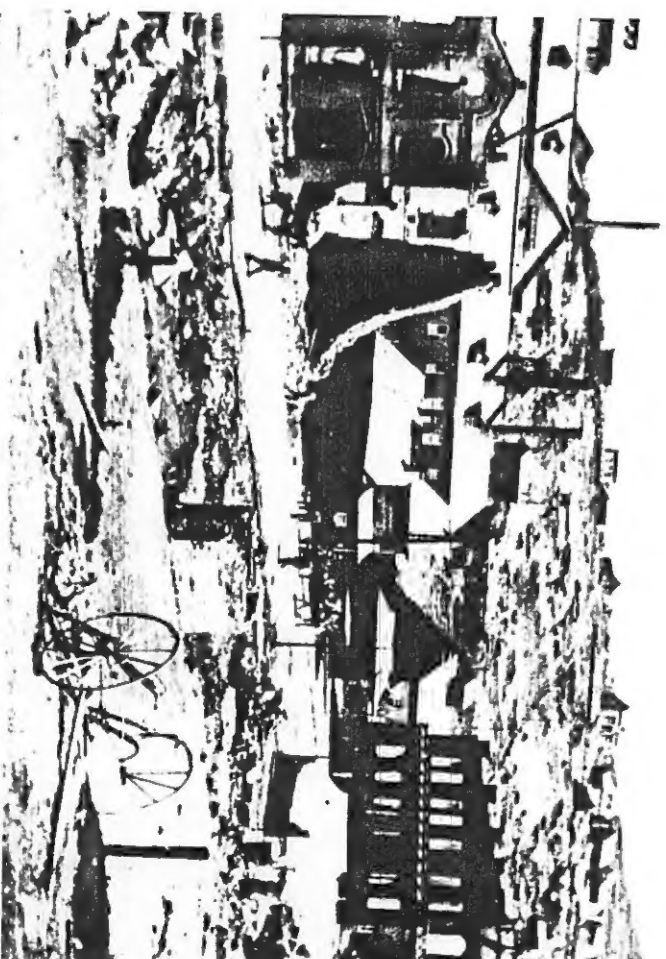
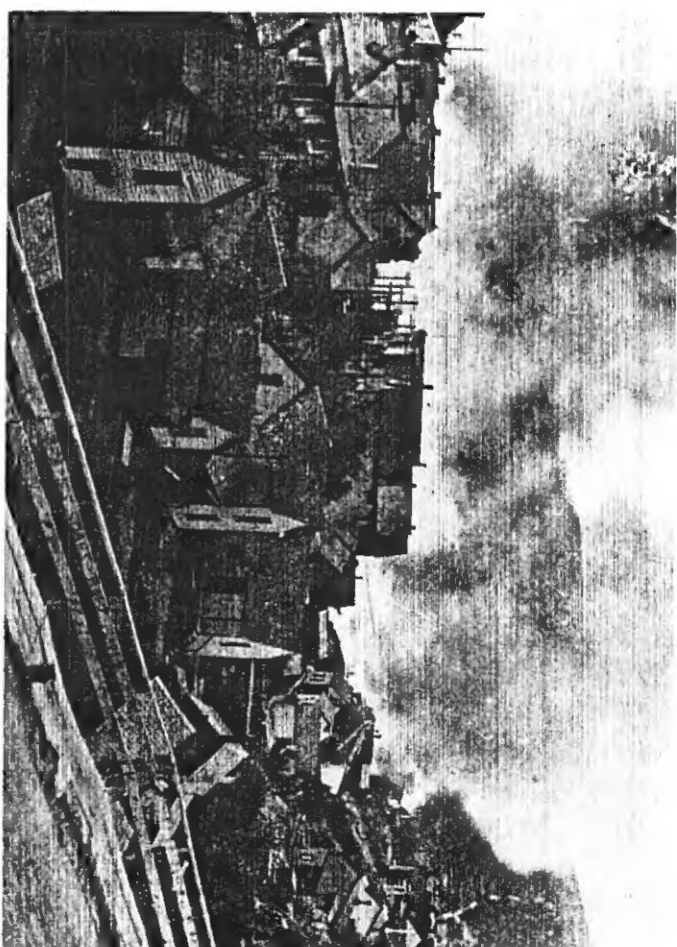
Courtesy: Valley Studio, Park City, Utah

Courtesy: Valley Studio, Park City, Utah

Remains of Congregational Church, 1898, Park City, Utah

Courtesy: Valley Studio, Park City

Looking South from bottom of Main Street 1898, Park City, Utah

Remains of City Hall, Marsac Mill in background, Park City, Utah, 1898

Courtesy: Valley Studio, Park City

Park City burns to the ground, June 19, 1898. -Courtesy Ken Webb-

Ruins of the City Hall after the great fire. The building front is still in use. -Courtesy Ken Webb-

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Tribune 4 July 1948

Park City Burns- Holocaust 50 Years Ago Destroyed Mining Center

Birth of disaster. Park City's great fire started at American House at 4 a.m. June 19, 1898. In minutes the hotel was doomed. | When daylight came the entire center of town was a roaring inferno, with smoke billowing high into the sky. This picture of the holocaust was taken from a point on Ontario dugway.

Remembered The Chinese

IN THE general confusion of the fire everyone forgot the Chinese, whose small colony was one of the first sections of the town to be destroyed. Everyone, that is, except Rev. Thomas Galligan, rector of St. Mary's.

Father Galligan found some 20 of the Chinese huddled in a cabin below town. They were without food and the clothing they wore was about all their possessions they were able to save.

Father Galligan immediately sent them quantities of rice and what other Chinese food he could gather to supply their immediate wants.

"They were forever grateful," he later recalled, "for they believed the Americans would exclude the orientals in the relief and rehabilitation of the town."

Father Galligan also was one of the leading spirits in the days that followed, heading relief committees and coordinating efforts in the reconstruction program.

While weary fire fighters still sprayed the embers, surveys of the damage to the stricken town were under way. Here charred walls of Park City's Grand Opera House stand gaunt and ragged above the rubble. This was one of the most imposing structures in town.

Utah's Gre

PARK CITY — The whole town caught fire. Dynamite and heroic action saved the fringes but never was so much damage wrought, never such a hot and exciting day in this mountain-hemmed mining town.

It was the great fire of 1898, worst in Utah's history.

In summary the catastrophe could read like this:

Lost — Most of Park City, wealthy and colorful outlet of fabulously rich mines

The cost — A million dollars.

A Saga of Community Courage

Fifty years ago Park City in flames was news that kept anxious crowds standing sympathetically by newspaper and telegraph offices throughout the state.

After half a century it's the story of individual and community courage and strength of the kind that the great sagas of history are made.

The Spanish-American war was brewing but next day it was crowded off the front pages. "Flames Destroy Park City" was the Salt Lake Tribune headline. War took a back seat and page one was devoted exclusively to the fire at Park City.

THREE SHOTS — Frontier signal of distress — fired from Policeman Thomas Walden's pistol awakened a few people at 4 a.m. June 19, 1898. Those who heeded this call for help found the American hotel wrapped in flames. Most of the town slept undisturbed. Of those who arrived some said the fire started in the kitchen, but Harry Freeman, the proprietor, insisted it was in an upstairs room where an oil lamp had been dropped or a lodger had forgotten to snuff out a bedside candle.

A few minutes after that first ineffectual alarm a Chinese ran to the Marsac ore mill office and wildly related what was happened to the hotel and surrounding buildings. James Forsythe, engineer on duty, gave the order to blow the mill whistle and wake up the sleepy town.

Whistles Empty All Towns Beds

Now the fire was racing from place to place but the Marsac whistle and others which took up the cry emptied all the beds in Park City that morning. Soon people swarmed the streets. Some were barefooted, some in nightshirts. Before long the entire town was hard at work fighting fire, carrying the sick and infirm to safety or moving valuables from doomed structures.

Here was fierce, stark tragedy. On what should have been a quit and peaceful Sabbath morning, the community was being devoured by a roaring, all-consuming fiery monster.

NO ONE was inclined to laughter then but in the intervening years the humor of the desperate situation has been recalled. Dozens "pitched in" to help the volunteer fire company, then realized that their own homes burned while their backs were turned.

"So there I was, in boots and a scorched nightshirt, without a penny, a roof or another stitch of clothes," is a common recital of veterans of the fire.

Dr. E. P. LeCompte, beloved physician and a real old timer, fought with unusual fervor. One witness described his action as being of "satanic" fury. While busy with a hose the doctor didn't notice that the "enemy" scored from behind until his tail coat and trousers were aflame. The toasted doctor hastily found another pair of pants and went back to the battle.

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By Bike

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Park ave. on that June day in 1898 was a shambles, with only outlying homes untouched by flames. This was the view looking north from Community church.

Another substantial structure, the Congregational church, was left in ruins, but its members were quick to join other denominations on rehabilitation group.

The Mayor Missed It!

He'd Gone Fishing

THE mayor missed the fire. Harry Deming had gone fishing "over on Strawberry" and horses weren't fast enough to get him back until dawn of the day after the catastrophe. Then his first move was to organize a committee to look after those the fire had made destitute.

Their city hall was gutted, but the council stood around the mayor and an official session was conducted. The community was in severe straits. Hardships were certainly ahead. If widespread suffering were to be averted, relief had to be quickly provided.

They talked it over. The decision they wanted to make was a hard one. Pride was measured against the needs of the people. Finally it was done. The council decided Park City would take care of its own. A relief committee of ladies, representing the various churches, would be the central agency. Offers of help proffered from the outside would be declined with thanks.

Help came from surrounding communities with all possible speed. Here a fire engine company from Salt Lake City battles flames at the rear of the opera house to prevent new outbreak of fire.

doctor didn't notice that the "enemy" scored from behind until his tail coat and trousers were aflame. The toasted doctor hastily found another pair of pants and went back to the battle.

By noon the strength of the inferno was stemmed. Fire fighters worked through the day and into the evening to guard against new outbreaks but the crisis was passed, loss could be surveyed.

Main Street Hardest Hit

Main street was hardest hit. Both sides of the street were leveled except the Marsac office and the D. C. McLaughlin office building. On Park avenue everything was gutted from James G. Watson's to David Keith's homes. Gone too were all the residences on Rossie hill from Harry Wonn's north to the Marsac tank house.

Dynamite had been used to blow up the buildings south of John Harwood's concrete residence. The Crescent ore concentrator, high on wooden stilts, had fallen with a roar when gnawing flame weakened its underpinnings.

CHINATOWN was wiped out. Hardly more than a single breath of the inferno was needed to sweep clean the cluster of shacks by Silver Creek. The Chinese bridge was destroyed too.

Help came from Salt Lake City, Ogden, Coalville and dozens of other places within buggy or horseback riding distance. Fire departments willingly shared their equipment. The railroads put on special trains. But the fire hit too hard and too quickly. All the effort massed against it could only hold the demon in check. The damage was done.

Check Shows No Lives Lost

Then the excitement was over, the fire coraled. Families scattered in the confusion were again united and a careful check indicated no lives had been lost.

But Park City's valiant fight had hardly started. Here were dreary ruins where yesterday had been pretty homes and busy stores. Comfort and prosperity disappeared. Hun-

Saved His Pictures!

And Started Over

W. A. ADAMS, Park City's remarkable artist-photographer, lost his place of business too, but some of his precious old-time photographs and some equipment were saved. Undoubtedly Mr. Adams made many photos of the fire and ensuing damage.

He made a fresh start too. According to an item in the Record, building then couldn't have been as difficult or require as much time as it does now. "W. A. Adams," the newspaper reported six days after the fire, "is erecting a new building on the old site and it will be ready for occupancy early next week."

Under the column heading, "Park Float," believed to be the longest used standing head in Utah, the Record editors calmly recounted the small events of their harassed community.

"Sammy Howell is on the street again for the first time since Miners' Union day, one year ago.

"The Sisters of the Holy Cross, after due consideration, decided not to give their school exhibition, scheduled for the 28th. The only suitable halls in which the entertainment might have been given were destroyed.

"Some of the secret orders have arranged to hold meetings temporarily in the Central school building.

"Main street contains strings of teams from the country with rough lumber to sell at $14 per thousand."

Catholic Church Spared by Flames

THE CATHOLIC was the only church spared. There were announcements of temporary meeting places for the others.

An item mentioning another Utah mining town that knew bad fires was given a humorous touch.

"L. L. Woodruff came over from Mercur to help his brother here. He landed in town with a large tent and took things as easy as one who was used to being burned out once a week."

A year and a half earlier, on Jan. 6, 1896, fire had struck Mercur, Tooele county gold mining camp, and only expedient use of dynamite finally brought the flames under control. The reprieve was short lived. Four years after Park City burned, Mercur was wiped out by another holocaust. This one on June 25, 1902.

By Bike t

Told by HA

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Would the town survive?

A year earlier the great Ontario and Daly mines and mills had closed down. There was a great deal of unemployment and many had left their Park City homes to seek work elsewhere. In the business depression of '93 the Park City bank had been among the casualties. Only the Silver King endured as a mainstay in the community's economic life.

Insurance rates in the canyon had been so high only a few had any protection of that kind. Fate was harsh.

Yet it was in this, their hour of despair, the people of "the Park" were to show their real mettle. For to a man, they all turned with vigor to the problems of reconstruction and relief, and in, it seemed, no time at all the scars of disaster were covered, and a new and greater Park City rose from the ruins.

Har[...]ipler in an old-time (1901) photograph and as he appears to[...]er right. His burned, cracked silver dollar in lower inset.

Eye-Witness

By Bike to Park City

Told by HARRY SHIPLER

I HELPED cover the Pa[...] City fire of '98 for The Salt Lake Tribune

Courage Conquers 'Blitz' of '98

Dr. Edward P. LeCompte was so intent on fire fighting that he got singed from behind. The inset shows Dr. LeCompte in '25.

Even though the Park Record was burned out, the town's newspa...

Park City residents were proud of their Grand opera house, scene of colorful early-day theatrical productions, which went up in flames. Elaborate curtain and box stalls shown here.

The mails came through, too, with the post | fire in the M. Stubeck residence on Main street.

Even though the Park Record was burned out, the town's newspaper didn't miss an issue, doing business as usual in a borrowed tent.

The mails came through, too, with the post office setting up shop immediately after the fire in the M. Stubeck residence on Main street, next to the Utah Power & Light Co.'s office.

By Bike to Park City

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I HELPED cover the Park City fire of '98 for The Salt Lake Tribune.

It was a terrible thing to see and hear—and smell—a town b... to the ground, especially a town you knew well from ...easant visits.

... that time I was just a kid working in the business office. The Tribune building then was on West Temple. Now it's the Utah Power and Light Co. building at 133 S. West Temple.

It wasn't part of my job to show up on Sundays, or to go to fires either for that matter. Usually, though, I'd go down and hang around for an hour or so.

Flash Comes to Tribune

When the flash came through that Park City was on fire I was talking with Homer Robinson and W. W. Rivers. (Later Robinson became general manager of the newspaper and Rivers treasurer of the J. C. Penny Co. mercantile chain.)

"Guess I'll ride up and see what it looks like," I told them after a while. They thought it was a good idea for anyone who enjoyed pumping a bicycle up Parleys canyon and along the dusty road over to Park City.

Two Tribune reporters in a buggy were already there when I arrived. They were almost overwhelmed by the immenseness of the fire and wanted me to help them. They went back to Salt Lake City that night.

NEXT day I went over the fire scene again, interviewing property owners and everyone who could estimate damages or give any information on insurance carried for the burned buildings and homes. Dave Murray of the old Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone Co. was one of those who helped me.

At one store we discovered the cash till in the rubble. It was still hot. Inside was a single silver dollar split into two pieces by the terrific heat. They gave me one piece and I've kept it these 50 years.

Writing Not in His Line

When I got back to the office the city editor—could have been either John Kane or A. G. Mackenzie—wanted me to write the story. When I convinced him that writing was strictly not in my line he gave me two reporters to talk to and I told them everything I'd been able to find out.

(Maybe this was the earliest use of the "big city" leg man-rewriteman system in Salt Lake. Next day The Tribune featured the resulting story on the first page. It ran more than 10 columns long.)

PAT LANNON was the owner of the paper then and the first thing he did the next day, a Tuesday, was to call me on the carpet. I was sure I was going to be fired for being absent without leave from my business office job.

"Harry! Come here," Mr. Lannon commanded.

This is it, I thought.

"Harry, I hear you were in Park City yesterday and the day before."

"That's right," I admitted.

"Then this is your story, isn't it?" He showed me the front page. There were the bold headlines:

"Brave Park City. Her People Face the Situation With True Western Grit."

Just Told Two Reporters

"No, sir," I said. "I didn't write a word. I just told two reporters what I'd been able to find out."

"...hat's what they tell me. Well, you get right upstairs. ...s a good story and Col. Nelson wants to see you."

... William Nelson, who became editor three years later, wanted me to transfer from the business department to the editorial staff and become a reporter. I turned the offer down. News writing was not for me.

Exciting stories like the Park City fire couldn't come more than once in a lifetime.

Women Take Relief Lead

Rev. Thomas Galligan, first to remember burned-out Chinese.

WHILE business and tradespeople went about their task of becoming reestablished, the "relief committee of ladies" bore the burden of meeting the needs of the distressed after Park City's fire.

Its officers were Mrs. Thomas Kearns, president; Mrs. W. M. Ferry and Mrs. Heber Rasband, vice presidents; Mrs. David Keith, secretary, and Mrs. E. G. Hunt, secretary. Four women assistants from each of the Catholic, Congregational, Episcopal, Latter-day Saints and Methodist churches were also active.

In the school next to the Catholic church, the Sisters of the Holy Cross opened a room to the relief committee, and this became the central supply depot. Here those who could assist and those who needed aid met together and worked out solutions.

The committee announced:

"Those needing assistance will be made to feel that this is a kindly help from those the flames have spared and will be given until such time as food, clothing and shelter can be obtained by the usual methods.

"We know that had we been burned out you would do the same for us and if one suffers all suffer with him."

Fire 'Clears' Accounts Of Dr. LeCompte

THERE'S a story that Dr. Edward P. LeCompte kept the record of his calls on his office walls. Whenever they were painted or papered all debts were canceled. The fire wiped that set of books clean.

That kind of generosity and willingness to share rebuilt Park City.

Perhaps no local event ever more closely resembled the affliction of the British people during the Luftwaffe blitz in World War II. The reaction was the same kind of tenacious courage and confidence.

All Joined Forces to Speed Rehabilitation of the Town

Newspaper Leads Fight For Rehabilitation

LEADING the fight to save Park City from becoming a ghost town was the local newspaper, the Park Record, published weekly by Raddon, Camomile and Co. Their office and printing plant was a total loss.

Ashes and wreckage were scraped aside. The Record promptly reopened on the old site, using a tent loaned by the Silver King mine and a desk borrowed from Mrs. W. W. Kennedy. After the fire the paper was taken over entirely by Samuel LePage Raddon.

Not an issue was missed.

Until its own equipment could be replaced the Record was printed in Salt Lake City. Line cut engravings loaned by The Salt Lake Tribune illustrated the first issue after the fire.

Until his death Jan. 14, 1948, Mr. Raddon was the dean of Utah newspaper men. His remarkable journalistic career started on The Tribune in 1871, the year it was founded. In 1884, he and J. J. Buser took over the Park Record, then the Park Mining Record.

Through the years to come the fortunes of the camp and those of Mr. Raddon rose and fell together. His editorials and mining reports were quoted throughout the nation. He was 89 years old when he died. A son, LePage H. Raddon, carries on the family tradition.

Park City had its share of "every man for himself," rough and tumble fighting. The great fire was a challenge for the camp to prove its maturity and save itself by the citizenry uniting in a common front to help each other. Their spirit was reflected in the Record's next issue. Most of the four-page edition was devoted to the fire but in every line the determination to rebuild and survive was apparent.

WITHOUT a single look to the past and loss of both store and stock was the announcement in a two-column advertisement: "Mrs. H. Fares has opened her new millinery parlors one door south of Welsh, Driscoll and Buck's.

"Her stock, while not so large as it formerly was, is entirely new . . ."

Another ruined businessman announced his new start in the world with the line, "Slightly disfigured but still in the ring."

Photos Often On Display

PICTURES on these pages are from the collection of one of the volunteer fire company members, James W. Don. For many years on the anniversary of the fire they were displayed in the post office. Besides being a member of the earlier fire company, Mr. Don was Second ward foreman for the city fire department. He was Park City postmaster many years and city justice after that. The collection now is the property of his widow, Mrs. James W. Don, 1125 Michigan ave.

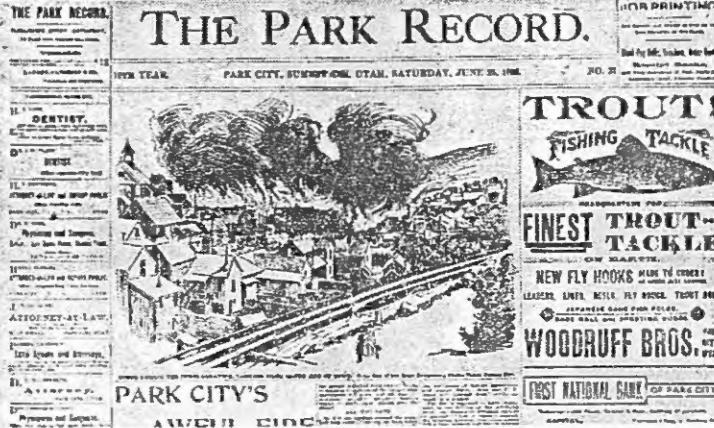
The photograph of Rev. Thomas Galligan was furnished by W. W. Ritter.

The Salt Lake Tribune.

FLAMES DESTROY PARK CITY

The Greatest Blaze That has Ever Occurred in the History of Utah.

LOSS IS PROBABLY MORE THAN A MILLION DOLLARS

The great fire dominated the news of the day, The Salt Lake Tribune's entire front page being devoted to the catastrophe and with war news going inside.

THE PARK RECORD.

The Park Record five days later was replete with details of the fire and at the same time advertisers advised "business as usual" in their establishments.

...atest Fire!

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W...ld the town survive?

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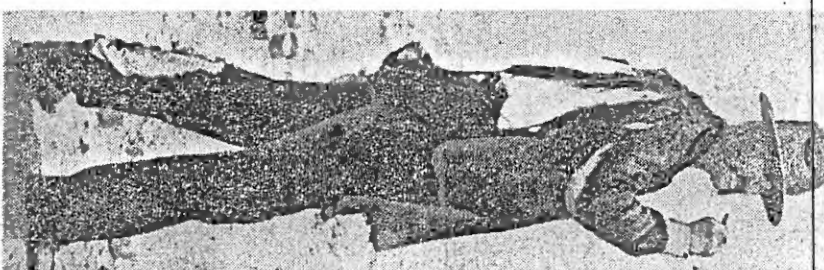
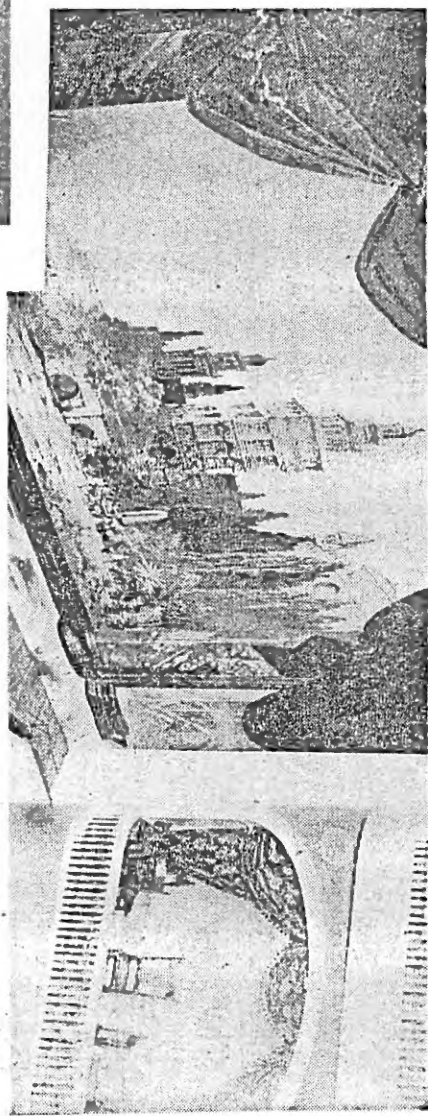
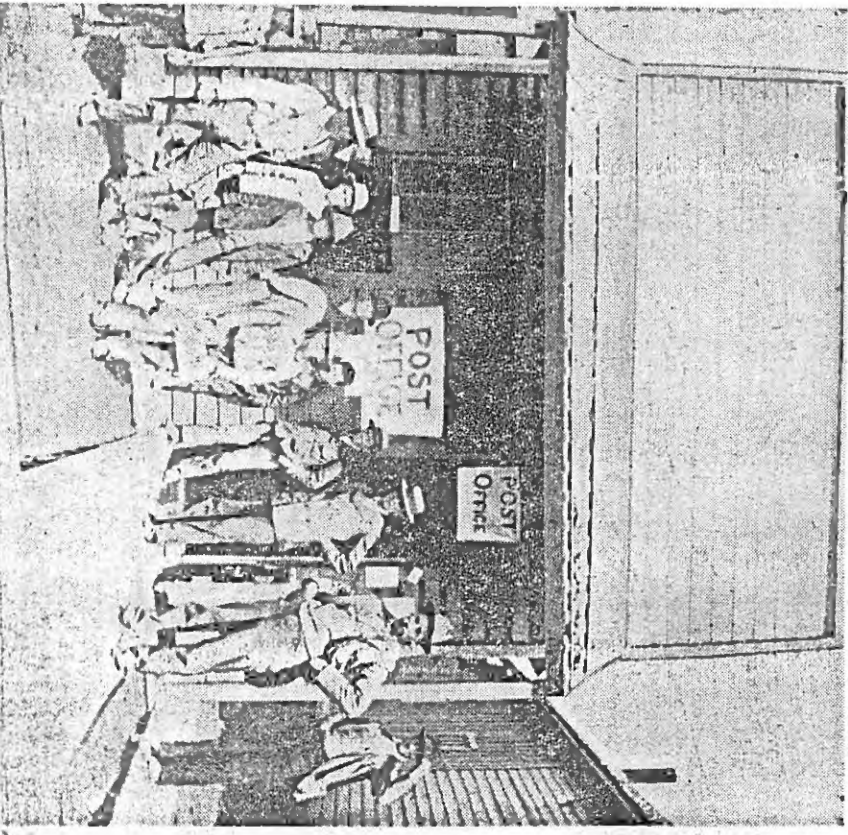
At that time I was just a kid working in the business office. The Tribune building then was on West Temple. Now it's the Utah Power and Light Co. building at 133 S. West Temple.

Dr. Edward P. LeCompte was so intent on fire fighting that he got singed from behind. The inset shows Dr. LeCompte in '25.

Even though the Park Record was burned out, the town's newspaper didn't miss an issue, doing business as usual in a borrowed tent.

Courage Conquers Blitz of '98

Park City residents were proud of their Grand opera house, scene of colorful early-day theatrical productions, which went up in flames. Elaborate curtain and box stalls shown here.

The mails came through, too, with the post office setting up shop immediately after the fire in the M. Stubeck residence on Main street, next to the Utah Power & Light Co.'s office.

Women Take Relief Lead

WHILE business and trades-

WITHOUT a single look to the